

# £30 million investment to provide Changing Places toilets

- £30 million available from government to install life-enhancing Changing Places toilets in existing buildings in England
- Changing Places toilets are a lifeline for more than a quarter of a million disabled people across the UK
- Government working in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) as co-chair of the Changing Places Consortium to provide support to councils
- Local authorities will soon be invited to “opt in” to receive a proportion of this funding, based on need, to install facilities in their communities

More than 250,000 disabled people in the country will benefit from greater access to life-enhancing Changing Places toilets, as the government announces a new £30 million fund to increase the number of facilities across England.

Announced today (4 March 2021) by Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall, the move follows laws that came into effect from January 2021 that made the provision of Changing Places toilets compulsory in certain new buildings.

Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets for people who cannot use standard disabled toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers.

Over 250,000 people in the country need these facilities to enable them to get out and about and enjoy the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted.

The combination of the change in the law and today’s investment for existing buildings means thousands of people with complex needs will have greater access to public places.

Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall MP said:

For too long, the lack of suitable toilet facilities has meant disabled people have faced major difficulties when they shop, go out, or travel and this should not be the case.

That’s why the provision of Changing Places toilets is so important for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

This programme is a significant investment from government that will help bring major, life enhancing freedoms to those people who have specific needs.

Kerry Thompson, Changing Places campaigner, said:

The biggest challenge I face when going anywhere outside my home is locating a Changing Places facility. They really do make a world of difference when planning days out so today's announcement will open up a whole new world for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on them. This wouldn't have been possible without support from Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium.

Knowing I have access to a Changing Places toilet lets me enjoy myself without having to worry about finding an accessible facility that can accommodate my needs. The additional funding from the government to improve facilities in existing buildings across England will give me and my husband the freedom that so many disabled people are desperate for.

This programme will be delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium, who will provide advice to support councils in their delivery.

Muscular Dystrophy UK, in partnership with MHCLG and the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, will also be undertaking a call for evidence with users in England to help develop an understanding of user needs and priorities.

Robert Burley, Director of Campaigns, Care and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

Today's announcement of £30 million worth of funding to improve facilities in existing buildings is fantastic news for disabled people across England who need Changing Places toilets.

Everyone has the right to use a public toilet when they need to, and these accessible toilets vastly improve a person's independence and make planning days out much easier.

This is a big step towards tackling the exclusion that many disabled people, including those with muscle-wasting conditions, experience when they are out and about.

Today's announcement would not have been achieved without everyone working together, and Muscular Dystrophy UK is particularly grateful to the hard work of our extraordinary campaigners and the members of the Changing Places Consortium.

Councils will be invited to "opt in" to bid for a proportion of the £30 million funding so they can install facilities in their communities and boost the number of Changing Place toilets in existing buildings, for example leisure and sports, cinemas, and arts and tourism venues.

This will improve the geographical spread across England and ensure more disabled people can take part in everyday activities that have the greatest impact on their quality of life.

You can find your nearest registered Changing Places toilet in the UK by going to the Changing Places website and using the [location map](#).

The government has recently closed a consultation of a review of provision of toilets for men and women in municipal and private sector locations in England.

## **Further information**

There are currently around 1,200 registered Changing Places toilets in England but provision needs to increase quickly to improve access for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets and their carers.

In the absence of Changing Places facilities, disabled people and/or carers face:

- limiting what they drink to avoid needing the toilet when they are out – risking dehydration and urinary tract infections
- sitting in soiled clothing or dirty nappies until a suitable toilet is found or they return home
- having to change a loved one on a dirty toilet floor
- manually lifting someone out of their wheelchair – risking safety
- reducing their time out of the house – restricting their social lives

## **Details for local authorities**

District and unitary authorities will receive full details of how they can access this funding soon. Authorities will be invited to complete a short expression of interest to receive a proportion of this funding. Local authorities are encouraged to consider where Changing Places toilets are most needed in their communities, and are encouraged to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver these facilities, including securing match funding wherever possible.

## **Details for organisations interested in installing Changing Places toilets**

As funding will be distributed through Local Authorities, we recommend getting in touch with your relevant local authority to register your interest in working in partnership with them to deliver a Changing Places toilet in your venue/ building.

## **Biggest consultation to date with Changing Places**

## users

To register an interest in participating in Muscular Dystrophy UK's consultation or focus groups please email [changingplaces@muscular dystrophyuk.org](mailto:changingplaces@muscular dystrophyuk.org)

The Changing Places Consortium launched its campaign in 2006 on behalf of the over 250,000 people across the UK who cannot use standard accessible toilets. This includes people with muscle-wasting conditions, profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people.

There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as people with other physical disabilities often need equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. With a lack of Changing Places toilets, many people are effectively excluded from being able to do all of the things that they want to.

Regulations (from 1 Jan 2021) now require that Changing Places toilets must be provided in certain new public buildings. This will improve the long-term situation by an estimated 150 Changing Places Toilets per year, but there is no legal requirement to retrospectively fit existing buildings. The combination of building rule changes for new buildings and £30 million investment for existing buildings will substantially increase the availability of Changing Places toilets, meaning thousands of people who cannot use standard accessible toilets will have greater access to public places.

See GOV.UK for the above mentioned [changes in building rules in England](#) to help add larger accessible toilets in new buildings.

Evidence suggests social isolation and loneliness amongst disabled people can increase the risk of a variety of physical and mental conditions. Research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for: high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and Alzheimer's disease. Greater social participation arising from a greater availability of Changing Places toilets has the potential to generate some health benefits.

There is potential for the construction of the facilities to be part of the economic recovery from Covid as we expect some of the experts involved in their constructions will be small and medium enterprises (subject to local procurement decisions).